

MOVIE REALITY CHECK: WHICH OF THESE 6 AIRBORNE ACTION SCENES IS THE MOST REALISTIC?

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POSTED BY ADMIN PRESS COMMENTS

Liam Neeson's latest action flick, *Non-Stop*, crashes into theaters this week, which got us thinking - how realistic is the average airborne action movie? We asked Tony Schienna - former intelligence operative, counter-terrorism expert, and founder of *Mosaic Sex* - to examine several classic plane scenes to see if, in real life, they'd ever get off the ground.

The Scene: A bad guy blows up Air Force 1 - Iron Man catches everyone as they plummet towards the ocean.

Tony's take: "Everything's based on altitude - at 10,000 feet, you're still able to maneuver around the outside of an aircraft, so if you're well trained and have those acrobatic skills... Well, it would still be extremely improbable that you could form a human chain like that, but there is a slight probability with the right people, the right circumstances, the right wind speed, the right altitude...but it's highly improbable. These guys are free falling for a minute and a half, so you're looking at an altitude of, say, 23,000 feet, which means the air is so thin up there, even if you're wearing an oxygen mask, you're probably going to freeze. I don't see it happening."

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The Scene: During a mid-air hijacking, the crooks zip-line from one plane to another, while the surviving guard miraculously manages to shoot up the bad guy's cockpit with his submachine gun.

Tony's take: "There used to be these guys called Barn Stormers, who flew these old-fashioned biplanes - they'd descend on some old town in the middle of nowhere and put on an airshow. They would do those kinds of things - they'd have a rope extended from one plane to the other and people would move between that rope and stuff like that, so it is possible at a low altitude and a low speed. But with jet aircraft? No. That would be extremely dangerous.

"As for that submachine gun, having a weapon that shoots multiple rounds at a speed like that is unlikely - there's too much chance of collateral damage. An air marshal I know carries a P229 Sig Sauer, calibrated for a .357 Magnum round, for its stopping power. I wouldn't say that's standard, but this particular one told me that. Air marshals are trained to shoot to stop, so you're either getting hit in the chest or you're getting hit in the head, which can immediately disengage the nervous system, meaning you immediately drop your weapon and drop dead in your tracks. A submachine gun would be a lot more hazardous, especially if the air marshal is tackled from behind and the trigger finger is a little loose - he'd be shooting passengers."

The Dark Knight Rises



The Scene: Agents interrogate Bane before their plane is blown in half and dangled under another, larger plane.

Tony's take: "If it's a large enough aircraft they'd have to compensate by increasing thrust and lift, but it'll depend on how that plane would actually fall and how it's going to break apart. So there's a lot of engineering questions there, but a large enough plane may be able to sustain that for a little while. The interrogation is not going to be likely – there would be way too much noise (by the open door) to make sense of it."

Octopussy



The Scene: Bond leaps on the back of a plane as it takes off, and proceeds to have a fist fight on top of it in mid-air.

Tony's take: "It looks ridiculous, but if you think about it, like I said earlier, you can actually crawl around a plane (at a relatively low altitude). He doesn't actually stand up, and he's holding onto that antennae. I'm going to say it's highly improbable, but there is some semblance of possibility for a trained operator – a paratrooper, or special forces agent – to do that, as long as he's not standing having the knife fight, and he's continually holding onto the plane while it's at a lower altitude. Forget about it if it's at a higher altitude and a higher speed, or when it's diving – no way."